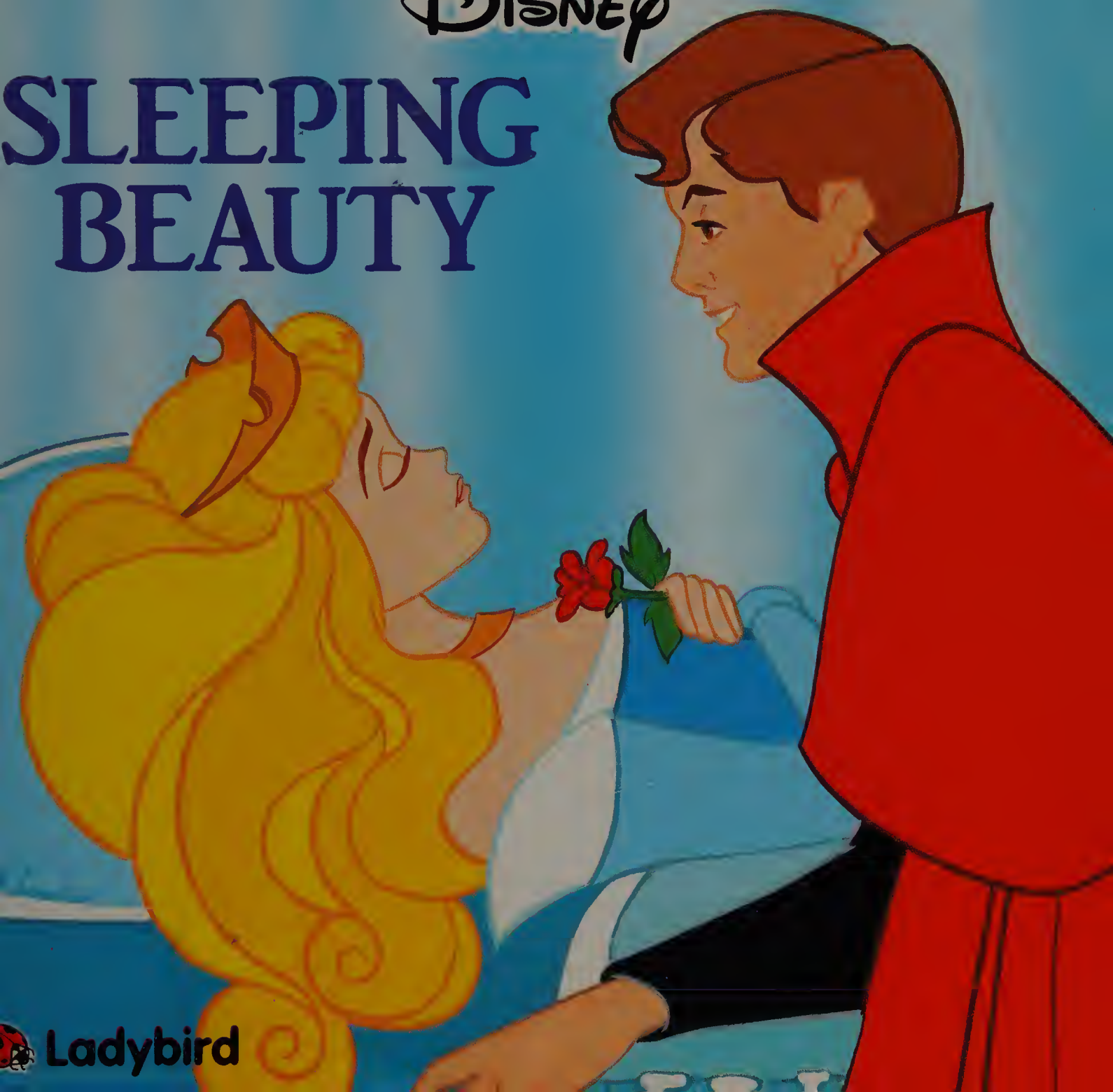


Disney

SLEEPING BEAUTY



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Ladybird Books



Long, long ago, in a faraway kingdom, a beautiful baby girl was born to the king and queen. They named the new princess Aurora, and they gave a magnificent feast to celebrate her birth.

The three good fairies of the kingdom were invited, and each one had a special gift for the princess.

“I give you the gift of beauty,” said Flora.

“I give you the gift of song,” said Fauna.

But just as the third fairy, Merryweather, was about to speak, a flash of lightning filled the room.





The wicked fairy Maleficent appeared. She was furious that she had not been invited to the feast.

“You will regret your mistake,” she thundered at the king and queen, “for I, too, have a gift for the princess! Before her sixteenth birthday, she will prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel, and she will DIE!”

Then, with her evil laughter echoing through the castle, Maleficent vanished.







When all was quiet again, Merryweather stepped forward.

“I cannot undo the evil spell,” she said, “but I can soften it. The princess will not die. Instead, she will fall into a deep sleep, and only the kiss of her true love will be able to wake her.”

The three fairies offered to disguise themselves as peasant women and take Aurora into the woods, to keep her safe from Maleficent until her sixteenth birthday. The king and queen were heartbroken at having to part with their beloved daughter, but they knew it would be for the best. Sadly they watched from the castle window as the fairies carried their baby away.





The fairies called the baby Briar Rose, and they made a happy home for her in their cottage in the forest.

As the years went by, Briar Rose grew into a lovely young girl. She was friends with all the woodland creatures, and she loved to sing and talk with them as she picked berries or gathered wildflowers. Sometimes, she told them about her fondest dreams – dreams of a handsome prince who would one day come and fall in love with her.

On the morning of Briar Rose's sixteenth birthday, some of her animal friends found a cloak, a hat, and a pair of boots drying on a tree in the woods. They decided to dress up in the clothes and surprise Briar Rose.

Briar Rose laughed when she saw them. "Oh, my handsome prince," she said, going along with their game. "I've waited so long for you!"

As she danced with her friends, she didn't realise that the owner of the clothes – a real prince – was standing right behind her!





Briar Rose gasped when she turned and saw the handsome young man. But he spoke gently and kindly to her, and as she looked into his eyes, she thought, "He really is the one I've been dreaming of!"

The young man told Briar Rose that his name was Prince Philip, and that his father had promised him in marriage to a princess he had never met.

"Her name is Aurora," he said. "But I know now that you are my true love, and I will marry no one but you."

Prince Philip and Briar Rose danced together under the trees, but all too soon Briar Rose had to rush home.

"I'll come back for you tonight!" Prince Philip promised.







Back at the cottage, the fairies were busy preparing for Briar Rose's birthday. Flora had made her a beautiful pink ballgown, and Fauna was putting the finishing touches to a splendid birthday cake.

Briar Rose was delighted. "First I met my true love, and now I have these birthday surprises. What a wonderful day!"

"We have another surprise for you," said Merryweather. "Today isn't just your birthday – it's going to be your wedding day as well!" The fairies told her that she was really Princess Aurora, and that she was to marry Prince Philip. "The wedding is to take place this very evening!" they said.

In the castle that evening, waiting for the wedding to begin, the princess saw a strange light outside her room. Curious, she followed it – down the corridor, and all the way up a winding staircase to a tiny tower room.

There stood Maleficent beside a spinning wheel.

“What’s that?” asked Aurora.

“It’s a spinning wheel,” said Maleficent. “Come and have a closer look, child.”

As Aurora reached out to touch it, her finger was pricked by the spindle. Maleficent screeched with delight.



At that instant, Aurora and everyone else in the castle fell into a deep sleep.

Just as his eyes were closing, the fairies heard King Hubert, Prince Philip's father, say something about his son.

"Where is he?" they asked. "We've got to find him!"

"Who knows?" mumbled King Hubert. "He met a peasant girl in the forest today, and he said he was going back to find her!"

The fairies rushed back to the cottage, hoping that they weren't too late.





But Maleficent was looking for Prince Philip too, and she was quicker than the fairies. Before the prince could reach the fairies' cottage, Maleficent captured him and took him back to her dungeon. There she chained him to the wall. "Just try to get to your true love now!" she said, laughing cruelly.





As soon as Maleficent was gone, Flora, Fauna and Merryweather appeared in the dungeon. They used their magic wands to break the chains and set Prince Philip free. Then they gave him a magic sword and shield – the Sword of Truth and the Shield of Virtue.

“These are the only weapons that can defeat Maleficent,” they told him. “Now go – and rescue your true love!”







When Maleficent saw the prince riding away, she was filled with rage. She sent a shower of boulders crashing down on him, but they just bounced off his magic shield as if they were pebbles.

Next Maleficent tried to put a forest of thorns in the prince's way, but he cut through it with his magic sword.

Maleficent was furious. There was only one thing left for her to do.

Just as the prince reached Aurora's castle, a monstrous dragon leapt down at him from the highest tower.

It was Maleficent herself, breathing fire and flashing huge and terrible claws at the prince. "Now see if you can defeat the powers of evil!" she hissed.

Prince Philip lifted up the Sword of Truth and flung it at the monster. With the speed of lightning, it sailed through the air and sank straight into the dragon's heart.

Howling and shrieking, Maleficent fell to her death, never to rise again.







At once the prince rushed into the castle. He hurried past the slumbering wedding guests, through the great hall, and up the stairs to the tower where Aurora lay sleeping.

He leaned over her and, gently and tenderly, kissed her.

The evil spell was broken!

Aurora opened her eyes. She gazed up at the face of her true love and smiled. Her dreams had come true at last.

Buzzing with excitement, the fairies woke everyone else in the castle, and, with much rejoicing, the wedding began. The celebrations lasted for days, and everyone was filled with joy – but none more so than Princess Aurora and Prince Philip themselves, who lived happily ever after.





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